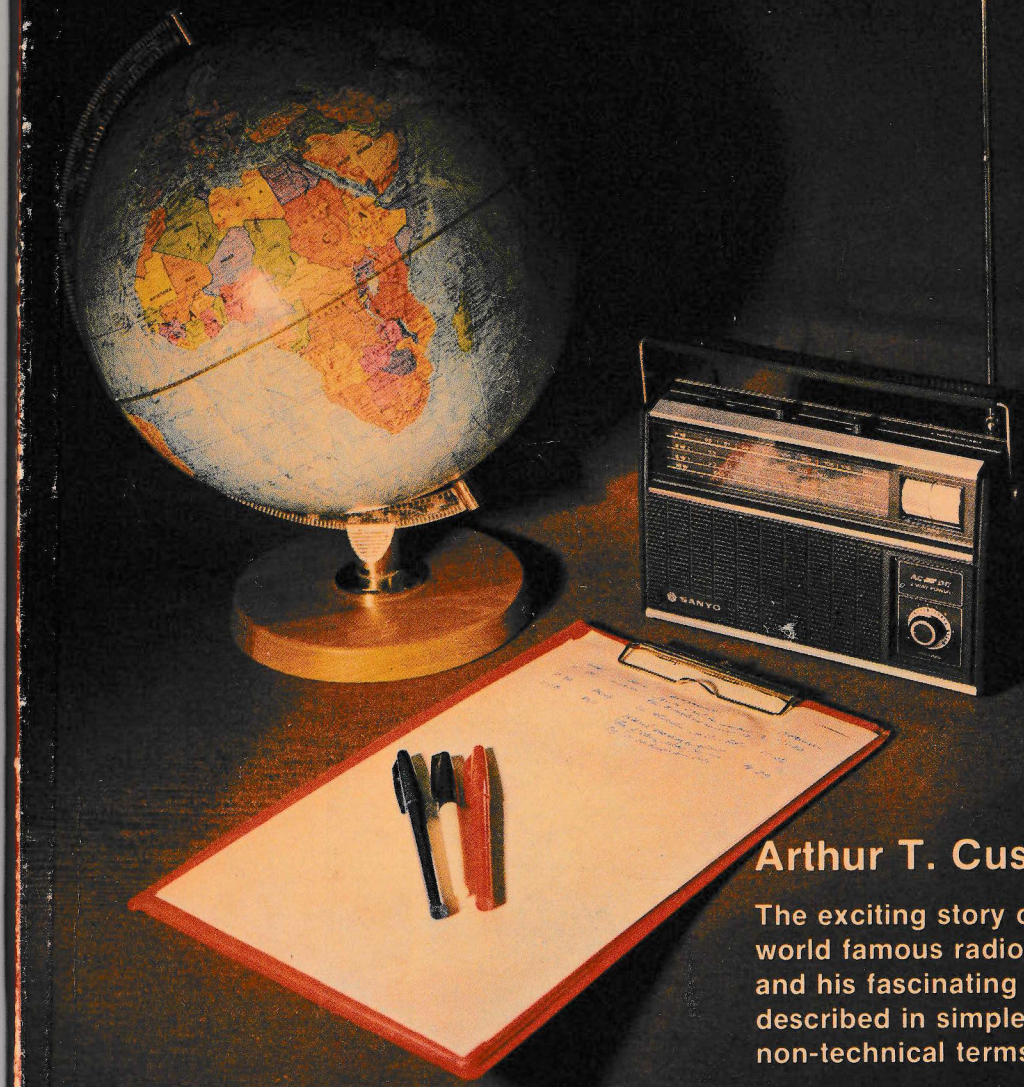
the world in my ears



Arthur T. Cushen

The exciting story of a world famous radio listener and his fascinating hobby described in simple non-technical terms

The World in My Ears is the amazing story of a blind radio listener who has become a world authority in his hobby, and the only listener who has turned his hobby into a full-time occupation while representing the six biggest shortwave stations in the world.

This is two books in one: an autobiography of the author's life in the world of radio, plus an introduction to DX radio listening in easy-to-understand text, illustrated with more than 100 photographs and covering all aspects of radio listening.

His is a very human story of a blind listener who developed his interest in radio from the early broadcasting years and who has devoted a lifetime to helping people throughout the world—particularly the less fortunate—to enjoy life better through the medium of radio.

It tells of the application of his specialised radio skills during wartime in monitoring the propaganda of enemy shortwave stations, associated with the interception and passing on of radio messages from thousands of prisoners-of-war to their next-of-kin, which resulted in personal recognition by Her Majesty the Queen.

The world-wide interest created by this book—the first of its kind—has been shown by the flood of mail for pre-publication information from listeners in all continents who rank the name of Arthur Cushen highly from listening to his sessions and DX information broadcast regularly over international shortwave stations.

ISBN 0 473 00019 9

THE WORLD IN MY EARS

Arthur Cushen and his wife Ralda being interviewed by Henry Hatch (left) at BBC London for a programme of "World Radio Club"

THE WORLD IN MY EARS

Arthur T. Cushen M.B.E.

Published and distributed by Arthur T. Cushen
212 Earn Street, Enwood, Invercargill, New Zealand.

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DEDICATION

This book is dedicated to my wife Ralda. Particularly as I am a visually handicapped writer, her understanding tolerance and help has made possible the success story contained in its pages.

— Arthur Cushen

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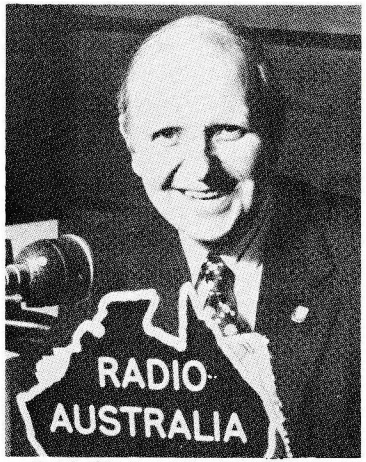


Keith Glover of Radio Australia

For someone involved in the dissemination of the spoken word over a long period of years, to be invited to write a foreword to this book is both a challenge and a privilege.

Despite continuing advances in technology, shortwave radio is still the most accessible international medium. Arthur Cushen has had a wealth of experience, both as a radio listener and as a contributor to programmes in his own country and overseas. We first met when he visited Radio Australia during the course of a world tour. But in 1977, I was privileged to see him at work in his own home in New Zealand. With magnificent support from his wife Ralda, Arthur manages to extract from his own listening, in his well-organised den, an expertise in communicating with others—by press, radio and letters. The book itself is both autobiographical and instructional, and is divided into such parts.

In my own years as a Broadcaster, I have had a special concern for my "shut-in" friends, especially my blind listening friends. But Arthur Cushen works under this great handicap himself, and is held in the highest esteem by colleagues throughout the radio world. Shortwave listening is a great hobby, and possesses a special "shrinking quality" when we contemplate the world around us. For many years, Arthur has given great encouragement to DXers everywhere through his columns, in newspapers and radio magazines, plus DX programmes on radio and his interchange of

ideas and experiences at seminars and conferences.

Dealing with radio generally under the heading of "Mass Communication", Associate Professor Erik Barnouw of Columbia University, U.S.A. once wrote, "Radio is the one medium that cannot seize the eye. It is therefore the one mass medium that can serve an active audience—getting up, bathing, eating, doing housework, commuting, picnicking, camping, cooking, going to bed."

Professor Barnouw was in charge of courses in Radio, Television and Motion Pictures at Columbia University.

So radio's role has become that of a constant companion. At Radio Australia, we have told our story under the title of the "Constant Voice"—a voice that is always there as a constant companion to anyone who wants to listen—sometimes a therapeutic companion for the sick and infirm, the injured and disabled, the lonely and the bored—but always, a friendly voice. May Arthur Cushen long be spared to spread to the world his unquestioned enthusiasm for this "constant companion".

Here you really have two books—not one. Arthur Cushen's "The World in my Ears" is a warm, human story of one man in adversity, turning a hobby into a consuming interest—plus the sharing and handing-on of his acquired skills in a most professional style.

Keith Glover,
Melbourne, Australia.
April, 1979.

Part One

CHAPTER ONE

How the listening began

Though I did not start listening to overseas stations as a hobby until 1935, radio listeners in New Zealand had been receiving verification cards as early as 1923 from overseas stations whose signals they had heard and reported. Among the earliest stations to begin broadcasting were KDKA in Pittsburg, Pa., U.S.A.; CFCF by the Canadian Marconi Company in Montreal, and WWJ in Detroit, Michigan. In the years of my listening I heard and reported these stations, and I received back their verification cards. KDKA stated on its card that its first regular broadcast was made on 2 November, 1920; CFCF had on its card that it had been on the air since 1919, and WWJ informed me that it opened on 20 August, 1920. I can claim that Broadcasting and I were born and grew up together.

In those early days, with crystal sets and simple valve receivers, all radio listeners were DXers, the term now widely used to denote all those who tune into distant radio stations. In the old days of Morse code transmission it was common to abbreviate words by putting the letter X for missing letters. Thus "weather" became WX; "London", LX; "Melbourne", MX, and "distance" became DX. (Even today, radio amateurs tell each other what the WX is.) Distant radio signals were called "DX signals", and those who heard them came to be called DXers. In the early 1920s, many New Zealanders who found Australian and American signals present at dusk and through the early evening, were unwittingly the forerunners of the DX listeners of today.

Two stations were in operation in New Zealand in 1922. Radio expansion was rapid, and by 1929 New Zealand had 24 private stations, as well as four YA stations operated by the Broadcasting Board. These YA stations are still operating today in Auckland, Wellington, Christchurch and Dunedin. When the first Labour Government bought out the radio stations under private ownership in 1937, all sold except two, 2XG in Gisborne and 4XD in Dunedin.

My first radio receiver which I purchased in 1937, was a Phillips 5 valve dual wave receiver.

The latter is still in operation with a long history of voluntary service to radio on a hobby basis dating back to the early 1920s.

Radio receivers then were primitive, and I recently inspected one which was put into use in 1922. The letter and the instructions which accompanied this three-valve battery-powered receiver showed just what the early listener had to face. At that time there were only two radio stations in New Zealand.

The accompanying letter said (in part). "The set is going well and will be consigned tomorrow. It picks up Auckland concerts very well and should you have any trouble in tuning to Dunedin we will send up an expert if you wish, but it will cost his railway fare. We think you will get on well without his assistance."

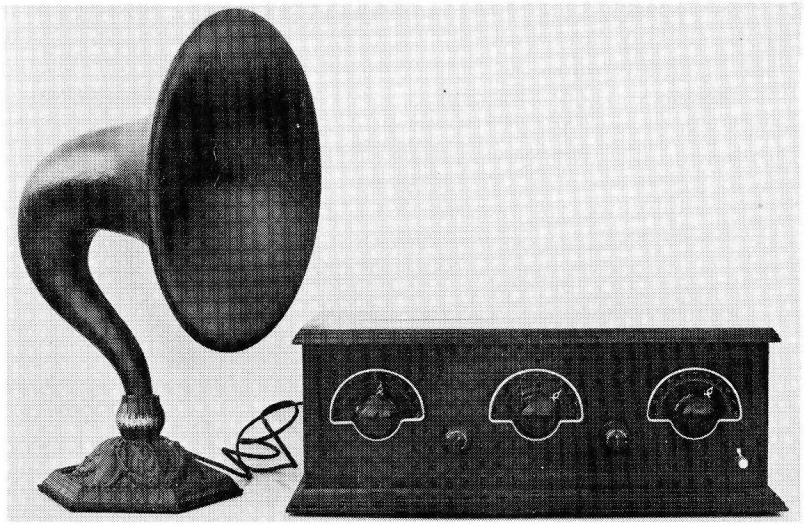
Included in the instructions were details of the erection of an aerial "which should be 70 to 90 feet long, and as high as possible. There should be two insulators, one at each end. For the lead-in you should keep this away from the side of the roof, and so the top of a bottle on the end of a stick out from the house is quite good for this.

You should twist the lead-in around the neck of the bottle or around the bottle itself."

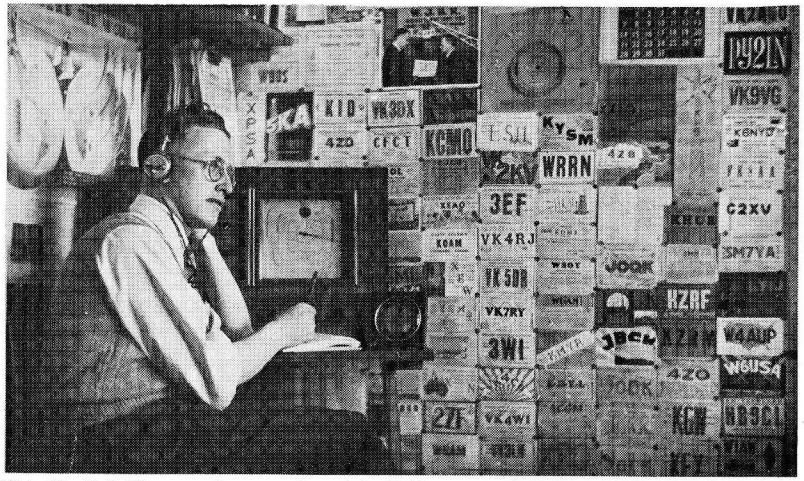
The instructions went on to discuss the earth system and stated that "as it is difficult in the country where there is not a water system, it is advisable to find a damp spot and drive a pipe into the earth." This advice about the aerial and earth is still basically good today.

A look through the copies of the "Radio Record" of 1929 shows something of the radio fare presented in those days, and recalls many now famous and history-making names in the era of early broadcasting. Radio listener licences at 30 September, 1929 were 48,627, an increase of 1,300. The number of sets in Otago and Southland included in that total was 3,980. In 1929 the four YA stations were in operation and running a daily schedule from 3.00pm to 10.02pm. News, market reports and sports results were broadcast at 7.00pm, while the children's session at 5.00pm was very popular. One of the best known comperes of the sessions for children was "Mr Announcer" and his fox terrier "Spot", who made their appearance at the microphone on many occasions. They were first heard by listeners of 2YA in 1927.

The YA stations each had a silent day. Auckland was silent on



This Stewart Warner receiver was the family wireless in the early 1930's and on which I heard many stations.



This English Ekco receiver purchased in 1940 was used continually until 1954, and as well as hearing hundreds of different radio stations, it also provided the information received during the war.

Monday, Christchurch on Tuesday, Wellington on Wednesday, and Dunedin silent on Thursday. All stations operated a full service on Sunday, Friday and Saturday.

By 1932, as well as the four stations in the YA chain operated by the Broadcasting Board, private stations were broadcasting from various points in the country, and of the 24 private stations in operation, eight were in Otago and Southland, six in Dunedin, and two in Invercargill, 4ZI and 4ZP.

The "Radio Record" made a feature of news from DX listeners, who found that signals from Australia and North America were frequently heard on their receivers. Many became avid long distance listeners, — our early DXers.

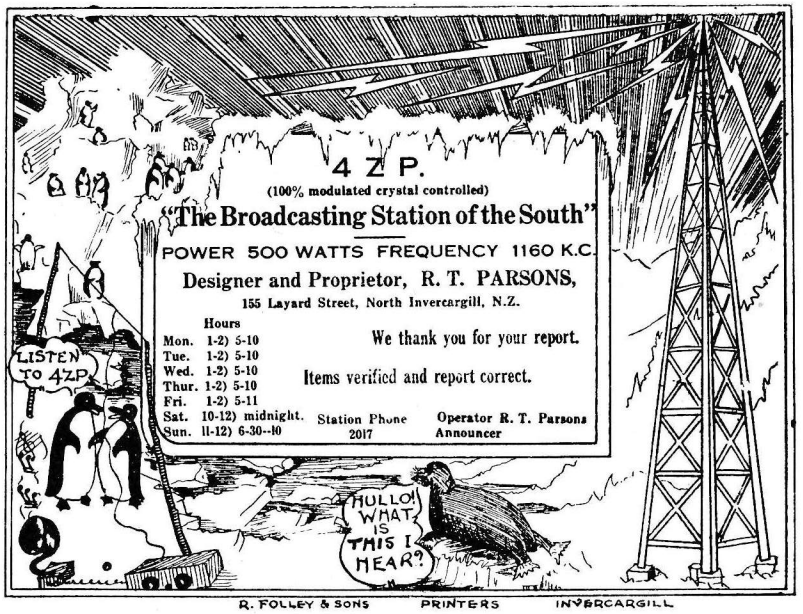
The closing down of New Zealand stations early at night left channels vacant for reception of distant stations.

Interest in the pages of this publication was therefore strong in the field of DX, as most radio licence holders were getting much pleasure from this new-found medium of entertainment, and they put up with static and weak signal conditions in order to explore the stations on their radio dial.

My earliest recollections of radio listening are of 1927, when my Father, who was an Engineering Instructor at the Southland

Technical College, constructed his first radio, and we sat around the table, with headphones on and with baited breath to listen to a mixture of crackles, whistles, speech and music from some distant station. This set served us until a Stewart Warner receiver in the early 1930s graced our home with its three dials, all requiring accurate tuning on each to bring in the wanted signal. Later we advanced to the superheterodyne with its single tuning control, its broadcast band and its short-wave coverage — those were exciting years in radio.

My Grandfather and Grandmother came to Invercargill in 1886 from London and brought up 13 children in their Invercargill home. My Grandfather subsequently became Mayor of South Invercargill. My Grandmother, who lived to 79, always kept her links with Britain, and her life was full of reminiscences of visits to historic places in London, and, as was the case in those days, was keenly interested in the Royal Family and all its associations. Naturally, when King George V made his first Christmas Broadcast in 1932, we stayed up


4 Z P.
(100% modulated crystal controlled)
"The Broadcasting Station of the South"
POWER 500 WATTS FREQUENCY 1160 K.C.
Designer and Proprietor, R. T. PARSONS,
155 Layard Street, North Invercargill, N.Z.
Hours
Mon. 1-2) 5-10
Tue. 1-2) 5-10
Wed. 1-2) 5-10
Thur. 1-2) 5-10
Fri. 1-2) 5-11
Sat. 10-12) midnight.
Sun. 11-12) 6-30--10
We thank you for your report.
Items verified and report correct.
Station Phone 2017
Operator R. T. Parsons Announcer
LISTEN TO 4ZP
HULLO! WHAT IS THIS I HEAR?
R. FOLLEY & SONS PRINTERS INVERCARGILL

This verification card confirmed my reception of 4ZP Invercargill, one of the first stations heard.

One of the interesting early shortwave stations heard. Many were private broadcasters from the Philippines using United States callsigns.

all night to hear the programme at 3.00am. We crowded around the receiver to hear his voice from London speaking across the world to his most distant listeners in Invercargill, and from that broadcast was set a pattern for annual listening to the royal message at Christmas. In later years, as readers will learn, fate played its part, and I was to be more involved than most in the Christmas message as one of my duties was to inform the BBC by cablegram of its reception in New Zealand over a period of more than 33 years. This was climaxed by personal appreciation from Her Majesty to me in 1970.

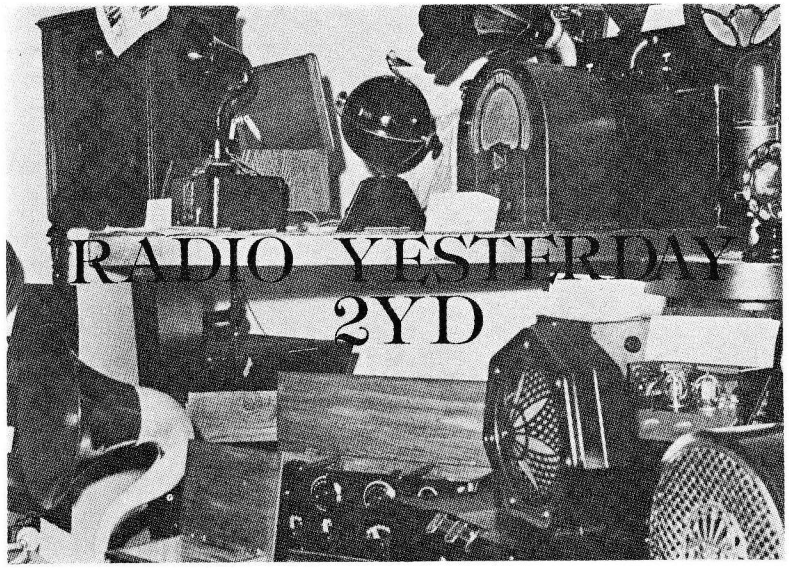
So fascinated was the public about radio in general that all manner of stories circulated about the city concerning listeners with high masts in their backyards, even to the extent that they could listen to conversations in the homes surrounding them.

As a result of the gossip by the early radio listeners about what they could hear on their wireless sets, the distant radio signals which I heard in the early evenings from North America were an exciting find on the dial. However, little was discussed among listeners of details. It was soon found that if you located a new station on the dial, it was not wise to tell your friends. Every early radio receiver also transmitted a weak signal which blocked other receivers in the neighbourhood with squeals on the same frequency. If a new station

became known it was lost to further reception as others attempted to tune in the newcomer on their dials. It then became the custom of the early DXers to identify and report to the new station before making it known to others that a new source of listening existed on the mediumwave as more and more new American signals became audible across the dial at dusk.

Microphones began to make their appearance, and a plug-in microphone fitted to the back of the radio made it possible to turn it into a primitive speech amplifier. I well recall how my Father and Uncle conceived the idea of making a broadcast supposedly originating from an Aunt in Auckland, who had just returned from Fiji. Using this microphone, a neighbour announced over a musical programme on the family radio of the forthcoming broadcast, and friends and relatives were advised.

It so happened that on the night selected for the broadcast we were in Tuatapere, and so our receiver had to be taken out to my Uncle's place to enable us all to enjoy the talk. The major worry was to find a



Radio receivers of the past are pictured on this verification card of 2YD Wellington, which broadcast for a short period in May 1978.

The Republic of Panama has no shortwave stations at present but in the 1940's many stations operated. This photo shows a collection of some of those I have verified.

suitable woman who would read the script while hidden in an outside shed, from which the microphone was connected to the receiver. This search proved impossible, but not to be out-done and thus disappoint the family and relatives, an announcement was made that my Aunt was indisposed. and one of the regular announcers would read the talk.

Just after it started it was soon realised that it was a little away from its stated theme because it dealt in some depth and in glowing terms with remarks not quite complimentary about some members of the family. My Father and Uncle sought to be excused from the room for various reasons, but we soon found out that it was due to the fact that they could not keep a straight face, and so, putting their frequent disappearances together with their seeming lack of interest in the talk, my Aunt found the telltale wire leading from the set to the shed outside. A bucket of water soon silenced the broadcaster, who had done his best to pull off the biggest hoax in our connection with radio.

My interest in radio listening suffered a severe setback in 1936 due to the sudden death of my Father, and, being the eldest of four boys, I went to work in early 1937. I was then given use of the sun porch which was off the back verandah, an ideal spot for listening with no

restrictions on the hours of listening, away from interrupting the rest of the household, and ideally situated for feeding in aerials which then began to run across neighbours' backyards, eventually covering a full city block. I was to use this location until my marriage in March 1946.

My own first receiver was a small five-valve Philips with one broadcast and one short-wave band, and on this I did my initial listening until 1940 when I started listening on an English EKCO domestic 7 valve receiver, which was to be my main equipment for a further 14 years. Simple household radios thus enabled me to hear the world.

By 1935 I was listening to DX stations and finding my way around the dial, and, like all who find something which fascinates them, continued to DX, not realising that hundreds of others were doing likewise. It was not until 1937 that I found that a Club existed to cater for radio listeners who were interested in this aspect of reception. I soon became a member of the local Branch of the New

Four DX League members who had over 1,000 broadcast band verifications photographed at Long Beach in the early 1950's.
Back Row - The late Mervyn Branks (Invercargill) Murray Lamont (Dunedin)
Front Row - Ken Mackey (Christchurch) Arthur Cushen (Invercargill)

Zealand DX Club and took along some of my verification cards which I had received from overseas stations, for which I was awarded the major prize at my first meeting with the Southland Branch. I had written to more than 150 stations in Australasia before I heard my first radio signals from North America on the broadcast band, but after members of the Branch told me how well and consistently they were received at dusk, I too heard the unmistakable sound of the North American signals and began to listen to and enjoy their programmes.

In two more years War came, and DX reporting was restricted to those stations which were neutral or in the Allied cause. Even so, many interesting stations which were set up for psychological warfare, as it became known, were heard from such remote areas as Adak, Alaska, Johnstone Island, New Hebrides, Somali, Brazzaville along with many other stations which circled the globe with broadcasts in the Allied cause.

CHAPTER TWO

Bringing hope to thousands

When World War II broke out in 1939 I offered my services to the Air Force, but due to poor sight I was rejected for any full-time military service, and, instead, I joined the Home Guard. At the same time I found that I could be of help to the community with my knowledge of radio listening, and together with other members of the New Zealand DX Club I formed a Prisoner-of-War Monitoring Service, with all messages being sent to me for pooling, comparison and subsequent mailing. Reception varied in most parts of the country, and often a vital word in the address would be heard by one member and not by others. Using a special form which gave credit to the listener concerned, the Service started, but as the War increased in impetus and more members were called into the services, it soon became almost a one man job, with my listening in all my spare time devoted to broadcasts from the Axis radio stations.

Service with the Invercargill Unit of the Home Guard meant that I could not listen on Sundays, but soon the authorities found that my knowledge, particularly in the field of security, was of great value to them, and I was transferred to this field of work. It was essential to keep a watch on enemy radio news about New Zealanders or of happenings in New Zealand, and in the latter case, to try to help locate leakage of information to the enemy. As later in this book you will read, this side of listening had its humour, sadness and help and also its deterrent to the wild rumours which circulated, — such as when some enemy station was supposed to have broadcast some news about a New Zealand city which rumour had not been heard officially by monitors who knew their job. As in other wars, rumours ran riot. The steady restraint of those who heard and knew the truth had to keep the population from being told disturbing news which was often without foundation. Few could sort propaganda from fact, — and the enemy was aware of this—, and so morale broke down in many cases as listeners tuned without restriction to enemy news

bulletins with many believing that the news given out was true. Unlike the Germans, who were not permitted to listen to Allied stations, the listeners in this country were vulnerable to this type of propaganda.

The 1939 War was primitive in its propaganda, because it was the first war in which radio had played a major role in news, but, even so, subtle tactics were adopted to lure the listener. Prisoner-of-War Messages were sandwiched into news bulletins, and Germany excelled in this. Even in recent years the Vietnam Radio was not as experienced in the use of this pathetic type of propaganda, in which men's lives were held as pawns in the propaganda war.

Unlike the fast service which the German and Italian radios provided, with names of men being broadcast soon after their internment, the Japanese had slow communications, and often more than two years elapsed before a message was received confirming that a civilian internee in Singapore or some other part of the Far East war zone was alive. During the Italian campaign the news from P.O.W. was the fastest experienced, because the Germans operated a station called "Radio Debunk" from behind the lines, and it was not uncommon to receive messages from men recently captured, and to pass these on to their relatives before the men were even reported missing by the New Zealand Government. This saved relatives the long anxiety from the time when a man was posted missing until confirmation that he was a Prisoner was received through the Red Cross or other channels.

The civilian internees in Singapore were some of the worst treated, and it was from their broadcasts that one could detect that all was not well. The women and children were evacuated from Singapore before its fall to the Japanese, and the men who remained had many months to wait until they were put on to the lists of internees, and often it was years before their names were broadcast. The Singapore Radio or Shonan Radio as it was retitled by Japan, was one of the key stations listened to by us. After the end of hostilities, the cheery messages from those interned were shattered and living conditions were revealed as primitive. Returned servicemen after the war told me of the infamous Changi camp, in which they had used the toilet for all requirements for water, and of the ill treatment and squalid conditions under which they had existed.

During the war, wives and mothers who had been evacuated to New Zealand formed a group, and many of them became close friends during this period, keeping checks as a group on the Singapore

frequency, often hearing some part of the message. Often when their turn came, their excitement was so great that they forgot to take down the information, but our message service could later fill in the words which meant so much to them. Many listeners on their own initiative took part in spasmodic listening, and these people, fired with the desire to help the less fortunate, also gave great service. Their lack of knowledge of listening conditions and relatively poor receiving equipment at first prevented them from receiving the fuller messages which the experienced DXer could receive, but as the years passed the intricacies of reception were overcome by the use of specially constructed aerial systems to ensure to their receivers the maximum signals possible from the wanted stations.

The most notorious announcers of the propaganda war were Lord Haw Haw from Berlin and Tokyo Rose from Radio Tokyo. Although neither directed broadcasts to this area of the world, Lord Haw Haw was heard frequently with his "Germany Calling", but his transmission was directed at Britain, while Tokyo Rose put her subtle words down into the South Pacific to American servicemen or in programmes directed at the United States. Nevertheless, these two names were synonymous for all of the propaganda announcers of the enemy countries. Though the voices of many of the other announcers became familiar after years of listening, it was the fact that English was not their mother tongue, — particularly Japanese announcers—, which caused headaches for many listeners, as their speech was not good, the pronunciation of Maori names far from accurate, and as a consequence difficulties arose in understanding the messages.

Equipment in those days was the usual household receiver with special aerials but no tape recorders, so it was not possible, as it is today, to play back a message time and time again, and so get the full text to pass on to the recipient. Equipment by today's standards was poor, but the enthusiasm of the DX Club members more than made up for this lack of professional gear. Seasonal changes affected listening. In the summer, reception was best during the hours of darkness, and so Berlin sessions were monitored up to 2.00 a.m; but in the winter, daylight reception was superior, messages being received from Germany at dusk. Tokyo, being almost due north, was not affected by seasonal changes and could be received reliably all the year round. The transmitters through the war years dropped in their performance, and signals weakened as equipment got old. Many fine New Zealanders offered their help in many ways to make the message-handling task easier. The gift of a New Zealand directory

was one item which enabled us to trace addresses after poor reception. The correct tracking down of names was essential, because if we could get the message to the right address, it would mean profound comfort, and in this connection the Post Office was always co-operative in trying to locate people when the address on our message was a little vague.

CHAPTER THREE

The axis mounts its propaganda war

At the height of the monitoring service, signals were being checked from Berlin, Rome, Tokyo, Warsaw, Shanghai, Peking, Bangkok, Penang, Singapore, Manila and Batavia. Most of these stations were broadcasting P.O.W. messages or news concerning New Zealand and its affairs. Stations such as Radio Hsinking in Manchukuo and other little-known broadcasters were heard infrequently, and under difficult listening conditions: the signals from these transmitters were unreliable, and information difficult to obtain.

So vital was this radio link from the Prisoner to his family that it was often hard for us to realize how very important this lifeline was to others and that we were playing so key a part in it. So many letters told of the wish to hear the broadcasts but they had no shortwave radio; they listened to Berlin often, but were not listening the night in question, or they were unaware that radio was being used to bring this type of information across the world to New Zealand.

By 1941 the service was established fully, and broadcasts were being checked from Berlin at 7.00 p.m. and 9.30 p.m. every night. These programmes of news also included a list of up to 10 names and addresses, but no actual message was included, as was the case later on in the conflict.

My files show that in a letter of Tuesday, 9 December, 1941, (New Zealand date), I wrote a survey of the previous evening's listening, which covered the Declaration of War by the Japanese. It reads that during that night I spent all of the time at the receiver, with the exception of the period 2.30 a.m. to 5.30 a.m., and checked broadcasts from many stations. No P.O.W. messages were heard, as all stations concentrated on the Japanese declaration. Australia had announced that Prime Minister Curtin had released the news that the Japanese had shelled Nauru, an Australian mandate territory. American stations were on all night, and the major news items coming through

were from Tokyo 6.30 p.m., Berlin 7.00 p.m., Berlin 10.00 p.m., Shanghai 10.45 p.m., Chungking 1.00 a.m., Manila and Bangkok at 2.00 a.m., Berlin 2.30 a.m., Berlin 7.15 a.m., and then Ankara also 7.15 a.m., and 7.30 a.m. Brazzaville; all were giving details on various aspects of the new Far East conflict.

The Germans discontinued the P.O.W. messages in January 1942 for a time, and only Rome Radio was heard giving P.O.W. messages, and these were of men from Britain and South Africa.

On 3 February, 1942, Radio Tokyo made the announcement that it would programme messages from Prisoners of War which would include rank, name and a message to relatives. Broadcast times were given, and this was indeed the announcement we longed for. The chaotic information on the position in the Far East was such that some service of this nature would be an invaluable link with men who were mising in this theatre of war. At the same time Japan opened some so-called "freedom" stations in occupied countries; one usually programming in Hindustani was heard often in English at 3.15 a.m., and, soon after monitoring began, information about New Zealand was being broadcast.

On 28 March, 1942, Radio Tokyo announced that Singapore Radio, now called Shonan Radio, would be back on the air to broadcast in several languages, and would include P.O.W. messages and those from civilian internees. By 23 May, 1942, Radio Batavia in the Dutch East Indies was back on the air, and also beginning its service in English of news and messages. On 30 May, 1942, another station had joined the Japanese network, and on that day we first heard Penang, Malaya, which had also been put back on the air as part of the Japanese propaganda machine. Over in Europe, Berlin had recommenced its P.O.W. messages, restyled its programme and called this "Anzac Tattoo", which comprised messages and general entertainment for listeners in Australia and New Zealand. By 1943, the whole of the Axis radio was in full voice broadcasting news and messages, and this was the year of the greatest number of P.O.W. messages. By September 1943, Berlin's programme was extended, and "Anzac Tattoo" was broadened to cover not only names but also messages from the P.O.W. in Germany to their relatives in New Zealand. This became the pattern until the closing stages of the war and the enemy radio stations were silenced, first in Europe, and later in 1945 in the Far East.

CHAPTER FOUR

The lifeline that brought hope

From the files of countless hundreds of letters, the same appreciation, thankfulness and relief is evident in all of the letters received from the wives and mothers of men who were previously reported missing, and then notified by me to their relatives as Prisoners of War. In my memory, after nearly 40 years, one particular telegram stands forever inplanted as one which represents the feeling of relief and gratitude. It read simply, "A Thousand Thanks and God Bless You. Here ends Anxious Days and Sleepless Nights".

My huge file collection tells of many messages sent to Australasia from enemy stations, including the lesser known low-powered enemy stations in the Far East, and these were passed on and received the usual grateful response. During this time too, the Vatican Radio was broadcasting a series of messages. From Vatican, Bishop Sneddon had attempted to contact the New Zealand DX Club to ask if we would act as official monitors and pass on messages, but his request never reached us and it was not until he returned to Auckland after seven years at Vatican Radio that this information became known to us. We did not monitor the Vatican Radio, because it was being done on an official basis, its signals were reliable, and it was therefore felt that our giving our time and talents to listening to the weaker signals could bring to light news which was not received well by official monitors and listeners in general.

From a survey of the files it is possible to give only an outline in this book of the many hundreds of letters of expressions of thanks. From the pages can be read the hope, appreciation and thrill these messages gave to thousands of New Zealanders. They were written by the aged, with expressions of their thanks as best as they could; written by children of P.O.W.'s whose mothers had taken on war work, or written by the wives of those missing in action. It is necessary to actually read the letters in order to comprehend the pathos which this news meant to them and their endeavours to put

Most of these members of the New Zealand Radio DX League played an important part in the Monitoring Service.
Front Row - Jimmy Martin (Dunedin) Des Lynn (Christchurch) the late Lloyd Warburton (Invercargill) the late Mervyn Branks (Invercargill) Murray Lamont (Dunedin) Peter Thorn (Dunedin)
Second Row - Eric Whitworth (Invercargill) Arthur Cushen (Invercargill) the late Ron Gray (Christchurch) the late Alex Allan (Invercargill)
Back Row - Lofty Gardiner (Christchurch) the late Bill Milne (Invercargill) Jack Fox (Dunedin)

onto paper their feelings of joy, relief and thankfulness.

The news broke long months of silence, waiting and anxiety for relatives, and, as each message was received, it was dispatched on a special form, with details of rank, number, Christian name and surname, and address of the next-of-kin in the communication to the recipient. Often even the camp was given. In the text of the message — particularly in the case of civilian internees — names and other personal information were broadcast, which was of extra benefit to the next-of-kin as it contained details which proved beyond doubt that the message was authentic.

Typical of the mail included messages such as, "Dear Mr Cushen, your letter and the radio message from my son, a P.O.W. in Tokyo Internment Camp, is safely to hand. We can never thank you enough for your kindness. This wonderful news, our last communication was from Hong Kong over two years ago. Believe me we are very deeply grateful to you".

February 28, 1945. "We very much appreciate your letter received

today from (a P.O.W.). We had not heard the message, and had no direct news from (the Prisoner) since the War began. Thank you very much for sending on this message. I am sure you earn the gratitude from many people for this work you are doing".

March 25, 1945. "I can't tell you how thrilled I was to receive your note yesterday enclosing my husband's message. It is so long since I have had a letter from him and to get such recent news, and to know he is safe and in good spirits is a great relief to me, as you may imagine, and if it had not been for you I still would not have had news of him, and so you will realise how much I appreciate your message and what it means to me".

March 5, 1945. "We wish to thank you for letting us know of ..... We knew he was a Prisoner in Singapore, but as we had no news from him we had begun to fear the worst. It was a very pleasant surprise to hear from you. He was one of the crew of the Hauraki which was sunk about three years ago."

April 19, 1945. "News from our relatives who are interned is always very acceptable and this was the first news we had received for two years."

November 22, 1944. "I am deeply grateful to you for sending this message to me. I have had no letters for nearly three years, and you will be interested to know I have only received two messages and each has come from you."

November 28, 1944. "It is a great joy to get the message from Shanghai so quickly. When they are able to send you letters they consist of only 25 words and take from 10 to 15 months to reach us, and as she is a Prisoner in North China, we get only about two letters a year."

December 12, 1944. "Many thanks indeed for so kindly sending me the message from him. The message is indeed a great comfort to me as I had previously received a message from the Government saying my son was missing."

The letters were not only of thanks, many were for help. When they heard of the service in Invercargill, Red Cross branches and individuals wrote concerning men missing in various theatres of war, and asking that, if news about them were broadcast, to pass on the information to these anxious people.

Again looking back in the files, a letter dated April 29, 1944, "the last news was received in October 1943, and this was written on November 1942". Mail indeed was slow, as indicated in this type of letter. A message broadcast from Singapore on May 7, 1944, was of

great comfort to one family, as it was the first news of their son since the fall of Singapore in early 1942. Another heard on August 24, 1944, was the first contact since December 1942, and the reply letter said, "You can well imagine this letter has gladdened my heart."

Missionaries figured prominently in the messages from the Far East. A message from one in Shanghai addressed to the Presbyterian Church resulted in an acknowledgement to me which included the passage, "Thank you for the message you picked up from Shanghai. I am sure there must be many in New Zealand indebted to you for sending messages from their loved ones. The message was also heard in Wellington in a much less full form and telephoned to the Church officers, and we have put the information from you in the 'Outlook' about the details".

One of the 1943 letters, dated December 12 said, "I received the wonderful news about my son yesterday. You say you hope I shall be pleased, you cannot know how that news comforts me, and what it means to we anxiously waiting mothers.It has been a terrible time since the fall of Italy, and to know that my boy is alive is wonderful. I just can't express my thanks, as it is just two years since my son was taken Prisoner of War."

Typical of the tragic way in which the families of serving New Zealanders faced life is given in a letter: "Words cannot describe how thrilled I was to get your letter. It has been a worrying time, as I have not heard a thing from him since Italy capitulated, and I have not heard from him since September 1943 almost a year ago. I received a letter from the Government on September 11 telling me my son was dead, and on September 13, 1943, I received a letter from my boy telling me he bailed out of the aircraft on June 22 and is in hospital in Dusseldorf with a broken leg."

And so the letters go on, each a gleam of hope, each an expression of appreciation, and each giving a sign of relief that some news, how little it may have been, had given birth to new hope that someone missing was alive. The number of messages picked up is estimated to be around 6,000 for the period from the first messages in 1941 until the end of hostilities in 1945, and the glowing tribute from these people is ample satisfaction that I was able to use my skills as a radio listener in bringing hope to thousands.

CHAPTER FIVE

The enemy is listening

During the war years there was strict censorship on all forms of broadcasting. Radio news was cut to a minimum and often said little about major happenings within New Zealand because of the fact that the broadcast signal had no restrictions and could be heard throughout the Pacific. The farmers were concerned when weather broadcasts were terminated, but it was obvious that this type of information could give a weather pattern to a submarine lying off the coast and this would enable the enemy to plot a weather picture of New Zealand. American stations on the broadcast band continued to be heard in New Zealand during the war years, as radio has no boundaries, and one of these broadcasts brought home to the listeners in Texas just what could happen if transmissions were allowed of weather information.

One evening I heard a broadcast from KGNC in Amarillo, Texas and, although this station was on low power and intended to be heard only within a few hundred miles of its location, the broadcasts were well received down here in southern New Zealand. When I wrote to the station, they were somewhat amazed to know that I had picked up their signals at this distant point and they used this fact to help put home the message to the farmers in the Panhandle of Texas that if weather broadcasts had been carried by KGNC they could have been heard as far away as in New Zealand.The Editorial in the Amarillo Globe-News of 6 January 1942, headed "The War and the Weather", said: "Not the least of the inconveniences of modern war is suspension of broadcast weather forecasts and the skeletonizing of printed reports. Many a Plainsman can't understand how a weather forecast for the Panhandle might be of aid to the enemy.

Of course the chances that a particular weather forecast would be used against us are remote. But we can't afford to take even a remote chance. A radio signal even from a comparatively small station has a disconcerting habit of bouncing about the globe and coming down to

earth in the most outlandish places. For example, 'sky wave' of KGNC makes the station audible in small areas of California, Mexico, Nebraska, Florida and, under certain conditions, even on the other side of the world. In the station's files are many cards and letters from such far-away spots as New Zealand, where KGNC broadcasts have been heard. One of the most recent is a letter received from Invercargill, New Zealand, on 17 November, in which the listener detailed 10 minutes of the station's schedule and asked for a confirmation. The listener even mentioned the weather which was broadcast at the time the program was received.

Now suppose that a receiving station at a Japanese submarine base could pick up KGNC's signal some clear, frosty morning. Then suppose it could pick up a dozen other stations in other parts of the United States, all of which gave weather reports. From this data a good weather man could compile a map showing with fair accuracy the movement of pressure areas, and thus determine probable conditions in any part of the United States."

Listening to the enemy was a freedom we enjoyed in New Zealand and it was left to us to sort out right from wrong, but in Europe there were millions who risked their lives trying to listen to the BBC and other stations from the Western world. Stations quickly sprang up broadcasting the views of the Allies, including the Free French Radio in Brazzaville in the Congo, Absie (American Broadcasting Station in Europe) which operated from Britain, and many Freedom stations broadcasting from North Africa as well as transmissions from North America. The famous 'V' sign (in Morse, three dots and a dash), was used in BBC broadcasts, and is even used today in some of the European transmission services from London.

As far as New Zealand was concerned the enemy broadcasts mainly gave the fighting in North Africa, sinking of warships and other naval activities, and shooting down of planes with New Zealand crews, but there was little actual broadcasting done towards New Zealand as we were only a small part of the allied machine. The files of information broadcast from enemy stations about New Zealand and New Zealanders are extensive but, though they did give some early indication of news in which New Zealanders were involved overseas, often these broadcasts were very much exaggerated and they proved mainly to be of a propaganda nature.

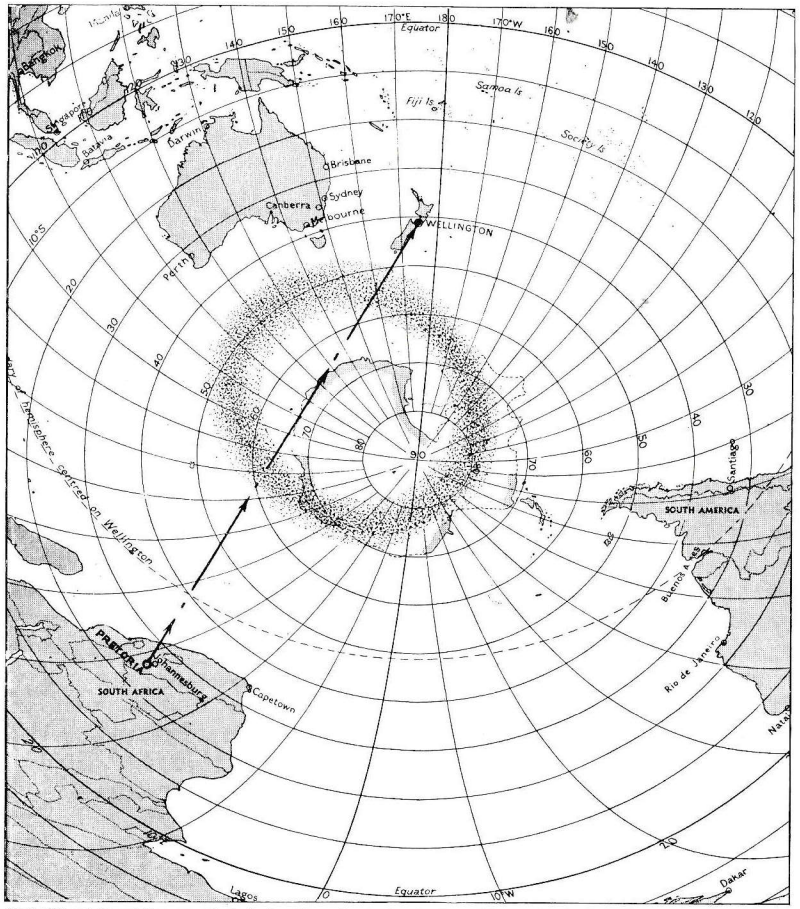
CHAPTER SIX

First with the news

There have been many scoops, not only nationwide but also ones which have caused world-wide interest because of my listening ability, but in this chapter I can deal only with some of those which would be outstanding. Perhaps one of the first that caused raised eyebrows in New Zealand was the All Black Rugby Football Tour of South Africa in 1949.

Black Outlook for All Black Tour: The broadcasting authorities sent Winston McCarthy to South Africa to cover the All Black tour but radio DX-listeners knew that the South African radio in those days was low-powered, difficult to receive in New Zealand because of the transmission path across the South Magnetic Pole and very unreliable. However just next-door in Mozambique, the Portuguese colony on the east coast of Southern Africa, was Radio Lourenco Marques. This station operated for many years with a commercial programme for listeners within South Africa, and not only did it enjoy immense popularity in that country but also throughout Africa. I made arrangements with Radio Club of Mozambique to broadcast the scores of the All Black tour in 1949 at 7 a.m. New Zealand time each morning of the day on which a game was played. This, I felt, would ensure that New Zealanders would get some news of the results long before any telegraphed information arrived in this country, and I was confident that Winston McCarthy's commentaries could never be heard in New Zealand via shortwave direct from South Africa.

This proved to be the case in the first match on 5 June 1949. I advised the broadcasting authorities of the arrangements of the times and frequencies on which Lourenco Marques would operate, and at 7 a.m. that morning the announcer gave the details of the first game of the All Black tour against Border, and the score was All Blacks 3, Border nil. Invercargill had no commercial radio station in those days and so I telephoned 4ZB, Dunedin, who were grateful for


Equator
Fiji Is.
Samoa Is.
Society Is.
Brisbane
Canberra
Sydney
Melbourne
WELLINGTON
Perth
Darwin
Broome
Port Hedland
Exmouth
Carnarvon
Geraldton
Albany
Esperance
Kalgoorlie
Norseman
Eucla
Ceduna
Port Lincoln
Adelaide
Mt. Gambier
Port Augusta
Whyalla
Port Pirie
Broken Hill
Mildura
Swan Hill
Shepparton
Wagga
Albury
Orange
Bathurst
Newcastle
Gosford
Wollongong
Nowra
Moruya
Bega
Eden
Cooma
Goulburn
Yass
Tamworth
Armidale
Grafton
Lismore
Coffs Harbour
Kempsey
Port Macquarie
Taree
Gunnedah
Dubbo
Forbes
Parkes
Cowra
Griffith
Deniliquin
Hay
Balranald

Signals from the ship soon disappeared and, despite many more hours of listening and searching, nothing more was heard from the vessel. On 3 February 1972 the wreckage of the Argo was found in the entrance to Queen Charlotte Sound, and so the mystery of the missing yacht which took part in the Wellington to Lyttleton race was solved. The Argo went down with a crew of seven.

Helping the Queen to hear London: For many years I have compiled log charts for radio manufacturers to be given to their customers when they buy a radio receiver. These small charts listed the main New Zealand stations and also those best received on shortwave. A more extensive list appeared in the Lamphouse Annual which was published during the 1940s and early 1950s.
This type of information enabled the customer who purchased a radio receiver to get added enjoyment from his new means of listening, as information as to frequencies and times of broadcasts were available through these small log charts. Undoubtedly the most prized possession in this regard is a chart compiled especially for her Majesty the Queen during her visit to New Zealand in 1953/54. The Royal Party had a free evening in Dunedin, and she had expressed the wish to spend it quietly and to have a radio which would be able to pick up BBC programmes installed in the lounge. This was done by Post Office officials in Dunedin and an aerial was erected.

I was asked to compile a list of programmes broadcast to New Zealand from the BBC during that evening and to recommend the best frequencies on which these transmissions could be received. This material was printed on a beautiful card and the one and only copy was given to me after the Royal Party left these shores. This must be the radio listener's dream to be able to help someone as keen to listen to home as Her Majesty was in those days with the necessary information to allow the Royal Party to accomplish this.

Papa mortuus est: The death of Pope Pius on 9 October 1958, was an interesting first for the Southland Daily News. This evening edition was the only newspaper in New Zealand to carry the news of the death of the Pope. I had been monitoring Vatican Radio during the afternoon when it was intimated that such an announcement might be made. I continued to monitor, and heard the announcement in time for it to be included in the stop press of that day's publication of the Southland News.

Twenty years later on 29 September 1978, while I was listening to

Vatican Radio I heard the first announcement of the death of Pope John Paul. This was immediately made available to Radio New Zealand and sent by wide-band line to Wellington; and this information and my recording of the Vatican announcement formed the basis of radio news for the remainder of the evening.

Civil Defence Alerts: Around the world, tragedy strikes in many forms while I am continuously listening, and I become accustomed to news of this nature. In this modern-day world when life seems to have little value, hi-jacking, hold-ups and accidents are occurring every day. For the majority of New Zealanders, Civil Defence is their main avenue of help and assurance and advice when a major disaster strikes. An overseas earthquake can have its repercussions right here in New Zealand. I can well recall hearing KORL in Honolulu, Hawaii, broadcasting a Civil Defence emergency and stating that a disastrous earthquake in Alaska had sent a tidal wave racing across the Pacific and that there was a possibility that it would hit the Hawaian Islands. I telephoned the local broadcasting station which immediately put me in touch with Wellington to the broadcasting authorities but they were unable to pick up KORL which was my source of information. Very soon afterwards a technician called at my home and took away the recordings I had made. This information was used in a radio main-news bulletin and a Civil Defence alert was put into operation. Thankfully the tidal wave, when it reached Hawaii, was of little consequence and it was a spent force by the time it reached the islands of the South Pacific. In a later year, an earthquake in Chile sent a tidal wave across the Pacific and in this case New Zealand did suffer some light damage on its beaches and ports on the east coast of this country.

The Death of President Kennedy: The tragical shooting of President Kennedy in 1963 was the cause of great activity on that day in my home. Immediately I flashed the news to NZBC. When I showed that I was able to provide an almost continuous report from the United States, a reporter spent most of the day with me and we were able to provide this country with many extracts of broadcasts from the United States on the shooting of President Kennedy in Dallas. News happened so fast on that day that it is difficult to recall all that happened but it is sufficient to assure readers that most of the material which was carried on the radio news originated right here in Invercargill.

News Aplenty: There have been many other interesting news items which have been released to the press and radio of this country: Peter Snell's announcement of his retirement from Prague was one of these. The fall of Prague to the Russians in 1968 resulted in a request from Reuters in London to keep them informed of the broadcasts of Free Prague which I was hearing in Invercargill, and so material was sent by the Southland Times to London to keep them informed of the progress of the Russian march into Prague. That was a memorable broadcast as the dramatic moments crept on until the eventual capture of the station.

News of another nature was the basis of an international hook-up in 1973 which was designated World Friendship Year.The BBC in London, Radio Nederland, Radio Canada, Radio Sweden and I in Invercargill representing Radio New Zealand had an hour-long hook-up in which we discussed the future of shortwave broadcasting. In this programme people in broadcasting whom I had met when overseas in 1969 took part. As well as being broadcast in an edited form from the five stations involved, Radio Canada issued a long-playing record with the highlights of this broadcast.

As news forms the basis of my listening and is complementary to my work for various overseas radio stations, it is therefore natural that I record items of interest and make them available to broadcasters in this country. This is the case with the New Zealand private commercial radio stations which receive my reports recorded from many parts of the world for inclusion in their news bulletins. In this system, Radio i in Auckland, Radio Avon in Christchurch and Radio Otago in Dunedin are the main participants in receiving from me information from overseas which is often the first broadcast in the country. Here again it would not be possible for me to list the news-firsts which these stations have had through me and which have been not only first in New Zealand but often first in Australasia.

CHAPTER SEVEN

The Korean War and Communist news

The Korean war was for the radio listener a real psychological battle, prisoners were used as pawns in a game of propaganda. For the first time, the actual voice of the prisoner was broadcast and, unlike in World War II when messages were read by the studio, the actual POW read the message. The lack of interest, in fact the complete distrust of the Americans by the communists of North Korea was such that the lives of these prisoners were of little concern. At one time over 6,000 were missing yet no one was prepared to give information of their whereabouts. In due course a list of prisoners was exchanged at Panmunjom, Korea, on 18 December, 1951, and a copy of this list shows there were many hundreds of names but there was no one from New Zealand. They were from United States, Greece, France, Australia, Canada, Holland, South Africa, Turkey and Japan. At the same time as the exchange of this list, we continued to listen to Radio Peking for messages. The members of the New Zealand Radio DX League formed themselves into a prisoner-of-war monitoring service and I was appointed officer-in-charge. This by no means was a one man effort. My thanks goes to many League members throughout the country, and particularly to Jack Fox in Dunedin who collated the material from that area and sent it to me. With all this material combined into a message we were able to provide the next-of-kin with the full and accurate details of what was broadcast; always, of course, depending upon reception conditions.

Throughout the war years in Korea there were many notable communications by way of prisoner-of-war messages and our files were most complete until the exchange of POW names.

New Zealand had only one prisoner, Gunner Graeme Garland of Cambridge who did not send a message home by radio.

In the main the messages were from the Americans, who had no postal communications with North Korea or China as they did not recognise these countries. On the other hand New Zealand, though

technically at war with Korea, had postal facilities of some sort and so letters from the distraught Americans were able to be sent to the POW camp through the monitoring service. Many of these letters through the Invercargill office were the only outside communications the prisoners had: in one case, only one letter in a whole year.

The replies which we received from the mothers and wives of these men is again typical of those in World War II. They had been distraught and they were now clinging to the hope that I could give them the news that their husband or son was a POW after eight or nine months of being posted on the missing list. One could appreciate just what a wonderful relief this was, and so the words of appreciation flowed out in many hundreds of letters. One letter received: "Your communication was of tremendous help to the family as the prisoner's mother had died last Saturday from cancer and the Doctor said that since she had heard the message this had done her a world of good." Another: "I am writing to thank you for your letter dated 1 May 1951, to express my sincere appreciation for your letter concerning the broadcast of my husband. You too, can imagine what great relief this must have been since this is the first news I have had since he was reported missing 27 November 1950. I have taken the letter to the American Red Cross to see if I can establish any communication with him."

The work of the prisoner-of-war monitoring service in Invercargill became well known throughout North America, and the New York Times and many other major papers carried information about the service being provided for the next-of-kin for the American Servicemen.

At the end of the Korean war a letter from the United States Embassy in Wellington is sufficient to show their gratitude for the work done here within New Zealand by radio listeners, and it stated in part - "Thank you kindly for your letter of 28 August in which you express appreciation for the services which this office was able to render to your organization during the past three years. We are all happy to be of service in this worthy cause. However, it strikes me that it should be we who are thanking you instead of you thanking us. The work which your organization performed during the conflict in Korea was, I should think, of immeasurable value in alleviating anxiety on the part of countless relatives of allied prisoners-of-war held in custody by the communists. While no medals or decorations are awarded for this service, I am sure that I am speaking for all my fellow countrymen who benefited by the service of your organization

when I express for them their heartfelt thanks."

The Vietnam war in 1964 repeated this work all over again. Messages from Hanoi Radio were recorded and the actual recordings sent to the next-of-kin in the United States airmail across the Pacific to grateful Americans who not only received the message but heard their servicemen's actual voices as broadcast from Hanoi. The gratitude in every case was the same - a tremendous relief at news; and to hear a voice of someone dear to them gave added assurance that their husband or son was alive and well.

One letter of gratitude said that they could not understand why we in New Zealand would take the trouble to supply such information to American women. As this American put it -"I am so grateful to you there in New Zealand, I did not think anybody was interested in us with our men in Vietnam and it is gratifying to hear that someone outside the war area is thinking, helping and trying to alleviate our suffering."

CHAPTER EIGHT

My darkest hour

From my very early days I was faced with poor sight and my schooling suffered, and when at class had to sit in the front row so that I could see the blackboard. At Southland Technical College this was the case, and I always felt a little embarrassed because I had to sit in the front row between two girls. In the early 1940s my sight had deteriorated so much that it was necessary to remove the cataracts which were the cause of failing sight. This operation was most successful and everything was bigger, brighter and larger than before. But as is the case of most of these operations, the eye is weakened and makes it susceptible to other complications.

In 1946 I married Ralda Maud Macdonald who lived in the same street as I did, we were married in the church in the same street, and built our new home also in the same street. Although I may be a world traveller by radio, the major part of my life has been spent in Earn Street, Invercargill.

Tragedy struck in 1951 when the sight in my left eye went completely due to a detached retina which has left that eye completely blind. Then in 1954, the right eye suffered a retina detachment and I spent six months in Dunedin hospital undergoing three operations to try to retain some sight in the eye. It meant complete rest, not even shaving, and through the expert hands of the ophthalmologist the sight was saved to a small degree and, despite a clouding of vision, even today daylight can be distinguished from dark. In 1955 when I was discharged from hospital, Ralda was given the news that nothing more could be done, and I would have to join the New Zealand Foundation for the Blind. This meant the learning of Braille by correspondence as there was no-one in Invercargill whom I could consult, and this also meant the ending of my broadcasting programmes which I had commenced two years earlier.

It seemed indeed a black outlook. The NZBS wrote to me advising that there was no opening for anyone with my disability in

The Telephone News Service for the Blind was the first for New Zealand. As Ralda recorded the news from the paper I operated the tapes.

broadcasting, but my friends told me there should be some future employment in what was, up until then, a hobby. My work for the BBC and other organizations had been completely voluntary, but, faced with the prospect of making radio listening my future, a request was made to London to find out the possibility of my being employed as their technical representative in New Zealand. At the same time

Radio Canada was asked the same request. Both organizations replied that they were keen to accept my offer of a continuous monitoring service, which to them would mean the end of any spasmodic reporting. It was the first appointment the BBC had made in this field, as up to that stage it had been the Government Broadcasting agencies which had undertaken the work with the BBC on a reciprocal basis. Since then, four other organizations have appointed me to similar positions, and these are the Voice of America, Radio Sweden, Radio Nederland and the Vatican Radio.

A Move into Writing: In 1951, I commenced to write features for "Electronics Australia", published in Sydney, and for the "New Zealand Listener", and both of these feature-articles still continue to be published today with a readership which runs to over a million. The New Zealand Listener feature was first published under the badge of the New Zealand Radio DX League, but was later taken over as a personality feature at the request of the editor, and is written under the title of "Shortwave". From this has come thousands of enquiries from New Zealanders asking all manner of questions about radio listening, and in this book most of their questions are answered.

In 1957, a radio comment feature "On the Beam" was commenced in the Southland Daily News and continued when the News was later taken over by the Southland Times. It continues to be published every Saturday, giving readers the latest information on radio trends in programming and in the commencement of many new stations.

There have been dozens of articles written by me for radio publications in many parts of the world. Often these have been in the form of guest editorials for DX clubs' magazines or could be part of a series on the listening hobby as broadcast by Radio Nederland. In the Asian area there has been particular interest in my DX-listening, and many publications have carried articles for listeners in those countries in which radio is just awakening as a means of communication.

Telephone News Service: Communications to the blind is restricted mainly to radio and the telephone when one is living alone, and so Ralda and I came up with the idea of making the news, which she read to me every evening from the newspaper, available to other blind people. We firstly found that Post Office regulations in those days prohibited the sending of recorded messages over the telephone. We pressed for the regulations to be altered; this opened the way for

"Arthur Cushen's DX World" is broadcast by Radio New Zealand on medium and shortwave, and is unique in the world as it is read from a Braille script.

the first telephone service for the blind, and later for many other answer-phone systems which are of benefit to the community. The news was recorded from the paper to a length of about ten minutes, and was slanted only to local items as radio provided the national and international news, local news on the radio being fairly meagre. Each caller had an allocated time to phone for the news as the system was not automatic and the tape had to be run back ready for the next call.

In an editorial in the Southland Daily News on 29 July 1963 the editor said in part "A newspaper would be failing in its duty if it did not record - with discretion - what is happening in the world about us. That is a simple matter of fact. It is also a simple matter of fact that it gives a newspaper deep satisfaction to record such a heart-warming story as The News published on Friday. That was the story of Ralda Cushen and her blinded husband Arthur. Mrs Cushen runs New Zealand's only telephone news service for the blind. She has been able to do this by enlisting the ingenuity of her husband, a shortwave radio enthusiast of world repute, and the co-operation of the Chief Post Office and of The Southland Daily News, and harnessing her own determination to enable blinded persons to take stock of the news of the day.

"Arthur Cushen is blind, but nothing that is kindly is hidden from him. It was natural, therefore, that when Ralda read The News to him in the evenings he should appreciate how much this would mean to others who could not see if they were able to share his enjoyment of the news of the day. It is typical of the man that he took action to ensure that this enjoyment was shared. His tape-recorded news service was soon established and now more than a dozen blind folk benefit from it. Typical too, was the reaction of his wife — she became a news reader overnight, bringing to others as she had brought to her husband, the life, the movement, the colour of the world today.

"That story leaped automatically to the headlines of The News. There will be many who will hope that it reaches headlines in other parts, because it reveals that here in Invercargill there are people who practise what seems to have become regarded as an old-fashioned virtue - the virtue of human kindliness."

In 1966 the telephone news service received national publicity when it was featured in the television series "Looking at New Zealand". In 1969 when Ralda and I went overseas for three months visiting North America, Europe and Africa, the service was temporarily suspended. On our return we found a pleasing increase in the local radio news, and, combined with a tremendous increase of my own work, reluctantly the service was cancelled. Even today there is a need for a service which gives the local information on deaths, births, marriages and such other personal news. One of their friends could die and blind persons would not be aware of this.

The increase in activity came from many sources, and the greatest was in mail from all parts of the world which is now running at 4000 letters a year being poured into the home postbox at 212 Earn Street, with a team of nine young women, working on a part-time basis, keeping the influx of mail answered. Working in morning and afternoon periods seven days a week and the occasional evening, this can be handled. Ralda has the continuing job of reading all incoming mail to me, keeping a firm hold on outgoing mail with checks for accuracy which is as essential as is neatness in presentation, as I am conscious that, even as a blind person, I am open for wide criticism if mistakes should occur in frequencies or times. Of course the bulk of my radio listeners who hear me broadcast do not realise that I am reading from Braille.

Broadcasting Blind: Frequently I have been asked by blind people and also sighted friends how it is possible to broadcast to a

The Social Centre for the Blind in Invercargill was a gift from the public of Southland.

world-wide audience such a variety of news as is contained in my "DX World" programme. Notes of interesting signals are kept and recordings made of new stations or those of interest to the listener. When the week arrives in which the broadcasts are to be recorded at the Radio New Zealand Studios in Invercargill, preparations then begin for subsequent use by the Radio New Zealand National Network and Shortwave Service or by Radio Nederland. With the help of one of the young ladies in my home office the monitoring news of the month is put into alphabetical order. One sheet is for Radio New Zealand which is a 15 minute broadcast, while another sheet is used to list material for the "Pacific DX Report" to be broadcast by Radio Nederland. When sufficient material is ready it is then read to me and put into Braille. The material is then prepared into the Braille script, but, owing to the fact that Braille takes five times more paper than print, the actual details are kept to a minimum with country, frequency, schedule and a few other details noted, while the rest of the material is adlib. This procedure generally takes nearly two hours to get seven pages of Braille ready for broadcasting. In the case of Radio New Zealand, at least two interesting stations are recorded and inserted into the programme.While these are recorded on a special tape at the speed used by Radio New Zealand, they are timed and a cue sheet provided for the technician. Over the next few days,

practice with the material is essential and a timing is also done to ensure that there is either sufficient material or what material should be given priority if time is running out.

Ralda and I then visit the Radio New Zealand Studios in Invercargill where we have a regular appointment on Wednesday 9.00 a.m. The Radio New Zealand programmes are recorded on tape and sent up by landline to Wellington for best quality reproduction and speed in getting the information on the air. The Radio Nederland programme is recorded on a 3-inch reel and airmailed to Holland.

The blind broadcaster when in the studio faces several problems as he has no communication with the producer or technician by visual means, and so sound is substituted. A typical broadcast will commence with a countdown, and then I go straight into the programme. Wearing headphones I can be given an audible tone when I near a given time so that I know I have 30 seconds yet to run. The inserted material is fed in and relayed into the studio booth so that it can be back-announced without any pause. In the case of a Radio Nederland session when there is only ten seconds tolerance either side of five minutes, one is so accustomed to time that it is possible to end the broadcast exactly on five minutes or a tenth of a second either side. Few sighted broadcasters could do this as they would be conscious of the clock and tend to race the last few seconds. Another feature of a blind broadcaster reading from Braille is that he speaks directly to the microphone and does not have to look down at the script. After the broadcast is over, the whole material used on Radio New Zealand is read back to one of the typists and 18 copies are then sent overseas to other broadcasting organizations and DX Clubs. The script of Radio Nederland is also typed and sent under separate cover in case the tape gets lost in the mail, but this misfortune has only happened once in over 160 broadcasts.

Over the years I have taken part in many broadcasts on Radio New Zealand including "Morning Report", "All Things Considered" and "Future Indicative" and have always felt a keen interest in Wellington in my work, and also every courtesy has been extended to me when it is known that I am discussing matters without a script. Having broadcast from Braille from Invercargill for 24 years I am also conscious of the kindness shown to me by the Manager and staff of Radio New Zealand over that period and I have always found that they look at my ability and not my disability when I am before the microphone.

My acceptance as a member of the Foundation for the Blind 1955

gave me my first meeting with fellow blind folk in the city at the Christmas Party that year, and I felt the lack of close comradeship because we seldom meet. There was also a need for education of the sighted community in our problem and this was brought home to me during the entertainment at this first Christmas Party I attended. A local secondary school girls' choir entertained us with bright singing, and then things suddenly went quiet... I asked Ralda if everyone had gone home... she replied in a whisper that the girls were putting on a story without words especially for the blind. This to me was my first introduction to well-meaning folk not thinking what they were doing, as for many of us the long silence became frustrating, wondering what was going on and with no indication of the events that were happening.

It became obvious that blind folk in Invercargill wanted more social activities and so a Branch of the Dominion Association of the Blind was formed in 1960. I became its first secretary and have held that position ever since. As the Association has powers under the Foundation for the Blind Act to nominate two members to Foundation Committee, Ralda and I were nominated to the Invercargill Advisory Committee and I still represent the blind on that committee, — Ralda relinquished her position in 1978. Soon the need for some typing and Braille instruction was observed, and some cane and basket activity desired and so the foundation was requested to commence classes in Invercargill. In 1966 the late Percy Frampton, who was President of the Invercargill Rotary, saw the need for a home for the blind in Invercargill and so the Blind Centre in Queens Drive became a reality after strenuous fund-raising efforts and the offer of the land by the City Council at a nominal rental. I represented the blind on the Building Committee and it was my design and layout around which the architect built the Centre. Safety, the use of natural light and ease of access were paramount in what was the first especially designed Blind Centre in New Zealand.

Over recent years it can be seen that there has been a gradual takeover by the sighted of the Blind Foundation and as it is a monopoly, the blind of this country have to endure this imbalance of employment and service.

This book is ample proof of the wide field of friends and the unbounding goodwill and help that I receive from the sighted community. I hope that the small minority in the country who seem to look on themselves as super-humans because they have their good sight, will soon learn understanding tolerance and goodwill towards

the blind which will break down present barriers and lead to co-operation and harmony, not only in New Zealand but also world wide, as it is a problem in almost every country overseas.

CHAPTER NINE

Providing a path for better reception

Most of the world's international broadcasters have relied on spasmodic reports from listeners throughout the world to enable them to get some idea of the coverage of their signals and the programmes which are enjoyed by the listening audience. Shortwave listeners on the whole are not very good correspondents and, though there may be many listeners who would enjoy a programme on shortwave, there would be few who would take the trouble to write to the station and give their comments. Thus, many of the Broadcasting Corporations have appointed paid monitors in various countries in order to receive a consistent flow each week of reports of reception of their signals.

I had been monitoring for the BBC since 1942 on a voluntary basis, but in 1960 they paid me as a employed member of the staff to undertake this type of work, and this was the first such appointment in the BBC's history. This was followed by Radio Canada and in 1972, when Radio New Zealand relinquished the monitoring of Voice of America broadcasts, the Voice of America contacted the BBC and sought permission to ask me to be their representative in New Zealand. This was followed over the years by Radio Nederland, the Vatican Radio, and just two years ago Radio Sweden appointed me as the technical representative in the Australasian area, and this is the first appointment they have made of a person to undertake this work on a paid regular basis.

The work involves the checking of frequencies to ensure the best possible reception for New Zealand listeners. I am not interested in the programme content as such, — although programmes of course are always of interest—, but it is the actual signal quality that is of concern. In these days, although there is some type of control on the allocation of frequencies for shortwave stations, there are always some countries which come up on a channel which is not authorised to them. The BBC still maintains its old policy of using the

In 1969 Radio Canada's Shortwave Club had a tremendous following with listeners, and this photograph was taken during the recording of one of the programmes. From left to right - Arthur Cushen, Ralda Cushen, Elaine McMaster (Club Secretary) and Duncan Nicholson (Vice President of the club)

frequencies which have been assigned to it over the years, and this enables listeners to find London on their radio dial if they remain on the same channels.

The suggesting of new frequencies, the testing of these frequencies and then taking into regular operation of a new channel is always done long before the listener is aware that this has taken place. There is a lot of back-room work to be done before a station commences to operate on a new channel towards New Zealand, — recordings have to be sent to London as well as other work done—, to make certain that the new frequency to be used is a change for the better and not for the worse. Just what the reports mean to the BBC engineers has been stated in their many letters, and it would be sufficient for me to quote from John Hynd of the BBC Engineering Service two extracts from his recent letters. "Finally, may I say, thank you for your continuing co-operation, and for the knowledge that our many broadcast frequencies are safeguarded by your vigilance." "Thank you for your very regular supply of E65 as to which the successful

running of our operation is indebted."

The monitoring is normally done on a domestic receiver such as is found in most homes within New Zealand and the aerial is always a short inverted L about 15 metres long and 10 metres high. This does not give a rosy picture of reception facilities, but in order to give the one which would be the normal case with most listeners in the area, I deliberately do not use special equipment in my checking the BBC or other signals beamed to this area. When the BBC or another broadcasting organization sends me an international telegram, asking me to look for a new frequency because of interference on their present channel, it gives me a great deal of satisfaction to feel that organizations such as these are dependent on my help and the choice of frequency I make because, after all, it is the listener in the Australia-New Zealand area who is to benefit when the broadcasts from London or some other station in Europe are better received than they were previously. Of course, there is always the problem of keeping the stations apart, trying to suggest frequency changes

The European DX Council meeting at Halmstad, Sweden in June 1969 was attended by many broadcasting personalities including from left Harry van Gelder (Radio Nederland) Phil Neuman (USA) Serg Neuman (USA - formerly Radio Nederland) Sonja Peerson (HCJB Quito Ecuador) Halmstad SW Club representative, Arthur Cushen and Jens Frost (World Radio and Television Handbook, Copenhagen Denmark)

In the studios of Radio South Africa, Johannesburg
Front Row - Ralda and Arthur Cushen
Back Row - Dorrieanne Berry and Arthur Hanna

which will give two stations a good clear signal; whereas if they are both on the same channel, neither benefits from the use of that particular frequency. This type of work occurs mainly four times a year when seasonal frequency changes are put into operation.

Meeting the Broadcasters: In 1969, Ralda and I went overseas to North America, Europe and Africa and met many of the broadcasters and station engineers whom we have come to know over the years in this work of radio monitoring. In the United States, we spent some time at the Voice of America transmitters at Dixon, California, and we were interviewed for a VOA programme. We also visited Sacramento, San Francisco, Los Angeles, Denver, Detroit, Niagara Falls, and then on to Montreal. Here we spent some time at the headquarters of Radio Canada International, and worked with those in the engineering division. Discussions took place on the best way to publicise Canada's broadcasts to New Zealand. Then followed

a visit to the BBC, Bush House, London and this was a most interesting experience, and nearly two weeks were spent in the London area, not only in the studios, but also at the monitoring section. I took part in programmes for the World Radio Club on shortwave, also I was interviewed for BBC domestic radio for the programme "In Touch". This is a weekly programme for the blind, and it proved so successful that it was repeated in the BBC feature "Pick of the Week". We then flew to Holland and stayed in Hilversum, the home of Radio Nederland, where we met personalities including Harry van Gelder, Edward Startz, and others who are not only on the microphone side of broadcasting, but also are the engineers of Radio Nederland. A visit was paid to the transmitters at Lopik but some time was also spent interviewing people for my own programme which was still being presented back in New Zealand because, as this was a working holiday, radio and magazine features had to be written and recorded each week.

After Holland, we visited Sweden and stayed at the home of Arne Skoog who was then the DX Editor of Radio Sweden. We worked at Radio Sweden with him and discussed the possibilities of a transmission to New Zealand , with Swedish Telecommunications, and following this discussion, a service to New Zealand was commenced in 1969. Later, we flew to Halmstad for the annual meeting of the European DX Council, and the International DX Parliament. This was a chance to meet broadcasters and other personalities from various parts of Europe and North America, and also present were listeners from these parts of the world. Moving back to Denmark, we spent some time at Radio Denmark, which in 1969 was running an English transmission world-wide, but this has since ceased. Returning to Britain, we attended the first convention of the World DX Club at Neath in Wales meeting Noel Green, Clive Jenkin, Harold Barraclough, Allan Thomson and other listeners from all over Britain who gathered to discuss the radio listening hobby.

Our return journey to home commenced with a visit to Switzerland and time was spent at the studios of Radio Swiss International at Berne, being interviewed by Bob Thomann for "Swiss Merry-go-round". In Rome, a day was spent at the Vatican Radio with Dr Michael Lemme, Chief Engineer, visiting the studios and transmitters at Santa Maria di Galeria, and later spent some time in Rome with the director of the shortwave services of Radio Italiana. A flight down to Nairobi and on to Johannesburg resulted

in a very pleasant week with Radio South Africa. Here, as in all places we visited, the excellent relationship between listener and the broadcaster was evident, and the utmost co-operation and kindliness was offered. Each morning, the announcer who was off duty, would call at the hotel in a car and take us to the monitoring station at Honeydew, while another day was spent at the site of the transmitters of Radio South Africa at Blomendal. Interviews were also recorded for Radio South Africa. Later we flew to Mauritius, Perth, Sydney and back to New Zealand. We were round the world in 80 days. We met people heard not only on the microphone side of broadcasting but also those who are in the engineering side and, in all cases, found them as co-operative, helpful and keen in their job as they appear on the air.

Royal Praise: The work in monitoring of BBC reception had an interesting sequel in 1970, when I was presented in the Wellington Town Hall with the MBE by Her Majesty the Queen. Her Majesty was interested to learn that after each Christmas broadcast at 3.00 a.m. in New Zealand, I would be sending international telegrams to the BBC in London, giving them details of reception in New Zealand so that they could quickly get a pattern of world reception of the Queen's speech. This had been for many years and was to her an interesting aspect of my work as a radio monitor and BBC representative here in New Zealand.

Looking Back: This chapter would not be complete without some reference to other items of outstanding interest during the years. In the field of promotion there have been many excellent promotions of the New Zealand Radio DX League both on radio and television, and for the blind in 1966 and 1967 in "Looking at New Zealand", also the promotion of such records as Molly and Nobody's Child which had a blind theme and were made popular throughout the country. We are not a television home,— not that we do not like television—, as we find the time spent is often wasted and is too precious in a busy life when one is working a seven-day week, and we are prepared to make sacrifices in order to achieve the things that we have to do. One is always conscious of the economic position of this country and of the pressures to try to increase the overseas income, and during the past few years, my own attempts in this field, although small in comparison to some organizations, have at least meant a doubling of my overseas income, which is by far greater

than that which is earned internally in the country. This would give anyone a little satisfaction that they are doing something in the present economic plight of this country, as in our attempt to increase our overseas earnings.

Part Two of this book covers the exciting hobby of radio listening, and from my experiences I have drawn on a considerable amount of knowledge which will help all those interested in bettering their past-time of listening to broadcasts of shortwave stations throughout the world.